



WRITING

for Every Classroom

Strategies that Engage Students



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The Big One-Five

Literacy Strategies – many of which include writing tasks to support learning

READING	WRITING
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ KWL Charts - Teaching students to skim and scan▪ ReQuest - Questioning Competition between teacher and students▪ CLOZE - Fill-in-the-blank competition - Often used beyond reading▪ Jigsaw Reading - Each student becomes an expert on a section▪ Metaphorical Thinking - Often combined with four-corners; requires students to research support and can become a writing activity.▪ GIST - Competition between teams▪ Anticipation Guide/Pre-learning Concept Checks – Pre-reading strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Exit Slips/Entry Slips - Brief reflections of the day(weeks) learning▪ Two-Column Notes - Organizing process for student note-taking▪ Graphic Organizers - Essential skill in pre-writing process (Frayer Model)▪ Capsule Vocabulary and Wordsplash - Requires students to learn AND use vocabulary▪ RAFT - Actual writing assignments using this simple organizer.▪ Cubing – Turning questioning into games while teaching students about higher-level thinking▪ Open Response Questioning-Asking students higher-level questions

Additional Great Strategies

1. Reader's Theater
2. Literature Circles
3. Learning Logs
4. INSERT
5. Concept Maps
6. Book in a Day
7. ABC Prediction Chart
8. Visual and Verbal Word Association

Additional Resource: *Middle School Edition: Content Area Reading* – a terrific collection of reading strategies that are useful in all content areas (103 pages)

http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/reading/grades_6-8.pdf

SPECIAL NOTE: **rubistar.com** is a valuable resource for creating rubrics

6+1 Trait® Writing - Trait Definitions (An Overview)

Ideas

The Ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with all the details that enrich and develop that theme. The ideas are strong when the message is clear, not garbled. The writer chooses details that are interesting, important, and informative—often the kinds of details the reader would not normally anticipate or predict. Successful writers do not tell readers things they already know; e.g., "It was a sunny day, and the sky was blue, the clouds were fluffy white ..." They notice what others overlook, seek out the extraordinary, the unusual, the bits and pieces of life that others might not see.

Organization

Organization is the internal structure of a piece of writing, the thread of central meaning, the pattern, so long as it fits the central idea. Organizational structure can be based on comparison-contrast, deductive logic, point-by-point analysis, development of a central theme, chronological history of an event, or any of a dozen other identifiable patterns. When the organization is strong, the piece begins meaningfully and creates in the writer a sense of anticipation that is, ultimately, systematically fulfilled. Events proceed logically; information is given to the reader in the right doses at the right times so that the reader never loses interest. Connections are strong, which is another way of saying that bridges from one idea to the next hold up. The piece closes with a sense of resolution, tying up loose ends, bringing things to closure, answering important questions while still leaving the reader something to think about.

Voice

The Voice is the writer coming through the words, the sense that a real person is speaking to us and cares about the message. It is the heart and soul of the writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath. When the writer is engaged personally with the topic, he/she imparts a personal tone and flavor to the piece that is unmistakably his/hers alone. And it is that individual something—different from the mark of all other writers—that we call voice.

Word Choice

Word Choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that communicates not just in a functional way, but in a way that moves and enlightens the reader. In good descriptive writing, strong word choice clarifies and expands ideas. In persuasive writing, careful word choice moves the reader to a new vision of things. Strong word choice is characterized not so much by an exceptional vocabulary that impresses the reader, but more by the skill to use everyday words well.

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just to the eye. How does it sound when read aloud? That's the test. Fluent writing has cadence, power, rhythm, and movement. It is free of awkward word patterns that slow the reader's progress. Sentences vary in length and style, and are so well crafted that the writer moves through the piece with ease.

Conventions

Conventions are the mechanical correctness of the piece—spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing (indenting at the appropriate spots), use of capitals, and punctuation. Writing that is strong in conventions has been proofread and edited with care. Handwriting and neatness are not part of this trait. Since this trait has so many pieces to it, it's almost a holistic trait within an analytic system. As you assess a piece for convention, ask yourself: "How much work would a copy editor need to do to prepare the piece for publication?" This will keep all of the elements in conventions equally in play. Conventions is the only trait where we make specific grade level accommodations.

Presentation

Presentation combines both visual and verbal elements. It is the way we "exhibit" our message on paper. Even if our ideas, words, and sentences are vivid, precise, and well constructed, the piece will not be inviting to read unless the guidelines of presentation are present. Think about examples of text and presentation in your environment. Which signs and billboards attract your attention? Why do you reach for one CD over another? All great writers are aware of the necessity of presentation, particularly technical writers who must include graphs, maps, and visual instructions along with their text.

Sample narrative, persuasive, and expository prompts are available at:

<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/prompts.php?odelay=2&d=1&prompt=1#prompt>

Source: <http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/definitions.php?odelay=0&d=1>

Thinking Through the Reading Assignment

Take 90 seconds to quickly scan your reading assignment. Use the headings, pictures and other clues you get from this scan to develop some questions about the reading. Then, as you read the assignment, take notes that answer each of the questions.

General Topic:

Question:

Question:

Question:

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:

ABCs CHART

Name _____

Topic _____

A-B	C-D	E-F	G-H
I-J	K-L	M-N	O-P
Q-R	S-T	U-V	WXYZ

Pyramid Summarizing Activity

Respond to the prompts below to complete the summary. Remember that each line should be slightly longer than the preceding line so the finished summary resembles a pyramid. (A more detailed description of this strategy can be found in Rick Wormeli's book, *Summarizing Strategies for All Content Areas*.)

Topic

Two words that related to the topic

A new title for the article

Effects of the topic

Main idea from the topic

Personal opinion of the topic

Arguments for the topic

Arguments for the topic (con't.)

Summarization Pyramid

Appropriate Grade Level: Any grade level can adapt **Reading Comprehension Strategy-**
Summarization Strategy

Summarization pyramids are very versatile. They come in many formats, have many possible sizes, and use many different prompts. It's a cinch to adapt the basic foundation of this technique to your curriculum and your students' needs.

Basic Sequence:

1. Construct a pyramid of lines on a sheet of paper. (Or make a handout for students).
2. For each line, choose prompts that yield one-word or short answers for the shorter lines, longer responses for longer lines.
3. If you have a large pyramid and a prompt that requires a lengthy response, consider asking student to use more than one line of the pyramid for their response.
4. Be sure to choose experiences that will allow students to interact with the intended topic in many ways. To learn something from more than one angle is to learn that something well.
5. Five to eight lines is generally a good summarization length, but do not be afraid to go longer with some topics.

Other ideas:

- The shape of the structure could have something to do with the topic too: clouds for the water cycle, trees for the life cycle, a bar graph or pie chart to express information about graphing data.

Source: Wormeli, Rick (2005) *Summarization in any subject*, ASCD, Alexandria, Virginia, p. 155-157.

Summarization Pyramid

Ideas for prompts:

- A synonym for the topic
- An analogy between the topic and a sport
- One question it sparks in you
- A book title or news headline that would capture the essence of the topic
- Three words that best describe the topic
- Three attributes or facts about the topic
- One or two other topics related to this topic
- Causes of the topic
- Effects of the topic
- Arguments for the topic
- Personal opinion of the topic
- Three moments in history of the topic
- The larger category from which this topic comes
- A formula or sequence associated with the topic
- People who use or are associated with the topic
- ETC



Source: Wormeli, Rick (2005) *Summarization in any subject*, ASCD, Alexandria, Virginia, p. 155-157.

GIST – A Cooperative Summarizing Activity **(Generating Interaction between Schemata and Text)**

See page 62 of *Literacy Across the Curriculum* for one version.

Purpose: To ask students to write a tight, precise summary of a reading passage.

Students are to convey a “gist” of what they read by summarizing the text in 20 words or less.

Procedure:

1. Ask students to read a short reading passage of no more than three paragraphs.
2. Ask the class, or group, to remember important ideas from the passage and list them on the board.
3. Discuss the list of words and reduce it to 20 or less. Delete trivial and repetitious information. Include only essential information. Collapse as many words together as possible. For example, if Robert Fulton, Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison are listed, collapse that into the term “inventors.”
4. Use the words to write a summary of the reading. Write the summary and revise it at least once.
5. (For the first time, many students will not understand what a summary is. A first effort is a teaching vehicle for summarizing as much as it is for the information read.)

Variation of GIST—

1. Have students write a 20 word summary of an assigned reading onto an index card. The summary should be on one side of the card and should not have the student’s name.
2. The students should stand and move around the room with teacher-provided music, trading cards as they move.
3. When the teacher stops the music, each student should choose a partner from the room.
4. With the partner, students read and evaluate the summaries on the two cards they are holding. On the back of each card, the pair gives the summary a total of 1-7 points in such a way that the two cards’ totals equal 7.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 three more times including scoring on the back of the cards.
6. Students return to their seats after the last scoring, taking the card they are holding.
7. Students total the scores on the reverse of the cards they are holding.
8. The higher the score, the more likely the better the summary.
9. The teacher calls for the summaries with the highest totals to be read aloud to the class.

GIST: A Summarizing Strategy for Use in Any Content Area

Overview: To teach students the GIST strategy, have students read newspaper articles obtained from newspaper websites. Students then identify journalism's "5Ws and H" (who, what, where, when, why, and how) and complete a template with the corresponding information they have found in the article. Finally, students use their notes to write a 20-word summary called a GIST. Once students have mastered writing a GIST using newspaper articles, the strategy is then applied to content area texts to support comprehension and summarizing skills.

Newspaper Summarizing – Answer the traditional newspaper questions regarding the reading.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

Acrostic Poems

Use a word related to the topic and write it vertically on the paper. Begin each line with a letter from the word.

Example using an acrostic poem to summarize an article about differentiation:

Quit treating all students the same

Use different strategies

Assess before teaching

Learn about your students

I do not have to be “on center stage”

Tiered assignments

You can differentiate!

Songs and Raps

Write a song or rap that includes the key ideas from the reading.

Patterned Writing

Use a short piece of writing with an identifiable pattern. Write the summary following the same pattern as the original.

Summarizing Model

If I Were In Charge of the World by Judith Viorst

Summarize the concepts from your reading by using the structure of the poem as your frame.

If I were in charge of the world

I'd _____,

_____,

_____, and also _____.

If I were in charge of the world

I'd cancel oatmeal,

Monday mornings,

Allergy shots, and also Sara Steinberg.

If I were in charge of the world

There'd be _____,

_____, and

_____.

If I were in charge of the world

There'd be brighter nights lights,

Healthier hamsters, and

Basketball baskets forty eight inches

If I were in charge of the world

You wouldn't have _____.

You wouldn't have _____.

You wouldn't have _____.

Or "_____."

You wouldn't even have _____.

If I were in charge of the world

You wouldn't have lonely.

You wouldn't have clean.

You wouldn't have bedtimes.

Or "Don't punch your sister."

You wouldn't even have sisters.

If I were in charge of the world

A _____

_____ and

_____ would be a _____.

All _____ would be _____,

And a person who sometimes _____ to _____,

And sometimes _____ to _____,

Would still be _____ to be

In charge of the world.

If I were in charge of the world

A chocolate sundae with whipped cream and
nuts would be a vegetable

All 007 movies would be G,

And a person who sometimes forgot to brush,

And sometimes forgot to flush,

Would still be allowed to be

In charge of the world.

Capsule Vocabulary

This is similar to WordSplash in that a set of terms is given to students. However, these terms may not have a single linking event or topic. The writer must use each of the terms in a coherent paper on a separate subject. This is a simple way of beginning the integration of content. The activity is often coupled with RAFT.

RAFT

- **R-** Take a specific role to write the paper
- **A-** Writes to a specific audience
- **F-** Use a specific format for the paper
- **T-** Write about a specific topic

RAFT Examples

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Newspaper	Readers in 1870's	Obituary	Qualities of General Custer
Lawyer	U.S. Supreme Court	Appeal Speech	Dred Scott Decision
Abraham Lincoln	Dear Abby	Advice Column	Frustrations with his generals
Oprah	Television Public	Talk Show	Women's Suffrage in early 20 th century
Frontier Woman	self	Diary	Hardships in the West
Constituent	U.S. Senator	Letter	Need for Civil Rights legislation in 1950's
News Writer	Public	News Article	Ozone layer is being destroyed
Chemist	Chemical Company	Instructions	Dangerous combinations to avoid
Graham Cracker	Other Graham Crackers	Travel Guide	Journey through the digestive system
Plant	Sun	Thank you Note	Sun's role in plant's growth
Scientist	Charles Darwin	Memo	Refute a point in Evolution Theory
Square Root	Whole Number	Love Letter	Explain Relationship
Repeating Decimals	Set of Rational Numbers	Petition	Prove you belong to the set
Cook	Other Cooks	Recipe	Alcoholism
Julia Childs	TV Audience	Script	How yeast works in bread
Doctor's Association	Future Parents	Web Page	Need for Proper prenatal nutrition
Advertiser	TV Audience	Public Service Announcement	Importance of fruit

Cubing

Detailed version of lesson:

1. Explain to students that by using higher order thinking about a topic, they can understand it better and remember it more easily. Let them know that by using the “Thinking Cube” they can think about a topic at six different levels.
2. Explain to students that by using higher order thinking about a topic, they can understand it better and remember it more easily. Let them know that by using the “Thinking Cube” they can think about a topic at six different levels.
3. Show students the “Thinking Code” either by using a transparency or by having an actual six-sided figure to manipulate in the classroom. (It is easy to make a cube of six to eight inches in diameter to be used for this purpose. Once made, it will last for years.) Model the use of the cube by thinking out loud for students as you “cube” something. You may choose to cube something concrete like a pencil, or you might wish to cube what you had studied the previous day. The important thing is not what you choose to cube as much as the idea that you are modeling the thinking process involved. *This modeling is best done by adlibbing, not with a prepared slide. This shows that thinking is not difficult, and that it is a process, not a product.*
4. Have each student prepare to write by obtaining clean paper and a writing implement.
5. Each of the six sides should be explained carefully and you should model the thinking involved.
 - a. **Describe it.** Consider/visual the subject in detail and describe what you see – colors, shapes, sizes, memories – what does it look like?
 - b. **Compare it.** To what is it similar? From what is it different? Explain how.
 - c. **Associate it.** What does it make you think of? You might associate it with similar things, or you can think of different things, times, places, people, etc. Just let your mind go and see what associations you have for this subject.
 - d. **Analyze it.** Tell how it is made or how it functions. If you do not know, make it up! (Used in pre-reading activities, students are making predictions.)
 - e. **Apply it.** Tell what you can do with it. How can it be used? How does it work?
 - f. **Argue for or against it.** Go ahead and take a stand. Be sure that you are able to substantiate your stand with reasons why you think so through reference to the text or to your knowledge or both.
6. Once the topic is agreed upon (usually the main idea of the lesson you have just completed, but it could be any aspect of what was learned today or in the past) have each student write individually on each level of thinking as you either rotate a pre-made cube or refer to the various levels from transparency or wall poster of the six levels of thinking. It is my experience that a physical cube is useful to manipulate so everyone can see each of the six sides in succession. Times may vary, but do not spend more than 2-5 minutes at each level of the cube. In some cases, depending on the topic and its complexity, you may spend as little as one minute on some of the sides. Feel this out by moving around the class to see what students are doing. *Take time to do the same writing on your own onto a transparency so that students will, later on, be able to see how you think about the same topic. This way, you may get the last word if you choose.*

Exit/Entry Slips

These slips are a writing to learn activity that requires students to reflect on their learning. Exit slips are completed and handed in before students leave the classroom while Entry slips are handed in as students enter the room for class.

Exit Slip Social Studies Example: After completing a discussion of the effects of the Civil War on Southern economy, which factors do you think had the most profound, lasting effects? Include two examples supporting your factors. Tomorrow's discussion will begin with your responses.

Entry Slip Family and Consumer Science Example: In the sewing unit of family/consumer science, we have designed and created a garment. Explain the process involved in your design and its construction, including any difficulties you experienced.

Generic Questions for any Classroom:

1. What did you learn today (this week)?
2. What could you have done to learn more?
3. What could the teacher have done to help you learn more?

Giving Them "the Slip"

Why use admit and exit slips in your classroom? Reading teacher Doug Buehl says they can...

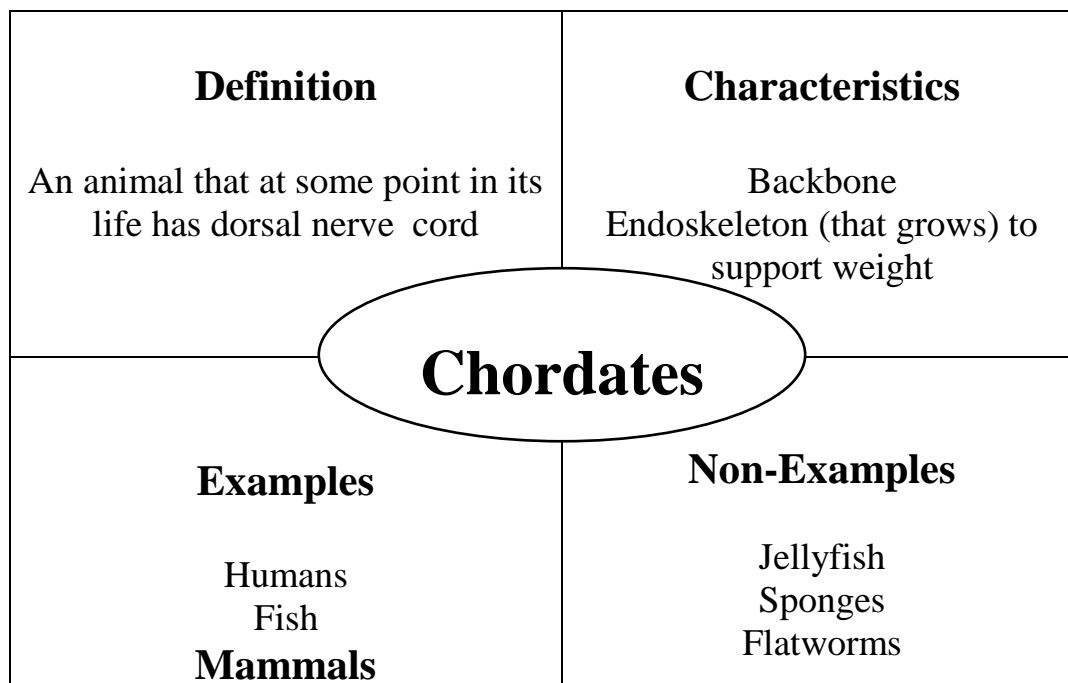
- encourage deeper processing of the material.
- facilitate review of key ideas.
- prompt students to consider what is most essential to know.
- help students condense or summarize.
- field questions about the material.
- provide a vehicle for students to express in writing some of their thinking.

Source:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/profdev091.shtml

Graphic Organizers (including Frayer Model)

There are multiple formats for using organizers for students. One of the simplest, the Frayer Model, works great as a vocabulary building strategy in any content area. The model is particularly effective when students need to learn technical terms. The model requires students to use the definitions, examples and non-examples (or facts/characteristics) in the figure.



Writing Frames

The writing frames below can be adapted to meet the needs of your content area and/or students. Students do not always need an individual copy of the frame; it may be appropriate to write the frame on the board or overhead for students to use as a model.

Source: <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/staff/D.J.Wray/Ideas/frames.html>

Discussion Frame 1

Some people think that _____ because _____.
They argue that _____.
Another group who agree with this point of view are _____.
They say that _____.
On the other hand _____ disagree with the idea that _____.
They claim that _____.
They also say _____.
My opinion is _____ because _____.

Discussion Frame 2

There is a lot of discussion about whether _____.
The people who agree with this idea, such as _____ claim that _____.
They also argue that _____.
A further point they make is _____.
However there are also strong arguments against this point of view.
_____ believe that _____.
Another counter argument is _____.
Furthermore _____.
After looking at the different points of view and the evidence for them, I think _____ because _____.

Explanation Frame 1

There are differing explanations as to why (how, what, when etc.) _____.
One explanation is that _____.
The evidence for this is _____.
An alternative explanation is _____.
This explanation is based on _____.
Of the alternative explanations I think the most likely is _____.

Recount 1

Although I already knew that _____,
I have learned some new facts. I learned that _____.
I also learned that _____.
Another fact I learned _____.
However the most interesting thing I learned was _____.

Cornell or Two-Column Notes

Key Ideas/Cues	Notes
Facts, Terms	Definitions, examples, descriptions
Important Ideas	Skip lines between each
Rules	Write on only one side of the paper
than	Teacher may begin by giving students both sides, only one and finally none
	Teacher may give students clues for key terms
Uses	Review for tests by covering up one side

Summary Area

Student Procedures:

1. During the class, use the note-taking column to record the lecture using personal shorthand.
2. As soon after class as possible, students should formulate questions based on the notes in the right-hand column. Writing questions helps to clarify meanings, reveal relationships, establish continuity, and strengthen memory. In addition, the writing of questions sets up a perfect stage for exam studying later.
3. Cover the note-taking column with a sheet of paper. Then, looking at the questions or cue-words in the question and cue column only, say aloud, in your own words, the answers to the questions, facts, or ideas indicated by the cue-words.
4. Reflect on the material by asking yourself questions, for example: "What's the significance of these facts? What principle are they based on? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know?"
5. Spend at least ten minutes every week reviewing all your previous notes. If you do, you'll retain a great deal for current use, as well as, for the exam.

POWER VERBS FOR POWERFUL QUESTIONS

VERB	ACTION REQUIRED
Compare	Show BOTH similarities and differences
Contrast	Show differences
Critique/Criticize	Give YOUR judgment or reasoned opinion, giving both good and bad points. You do not have to attack it.
Define	Give formal meaning by DISTINGUISHING IT FROM RELATED TERMS . You do not have to attack it.
Describe	Write a detailed account which CREATES A VERBAL PICTURE
Discuss	Give details by explaining PROS AND CONS
Explain	Giving meaning by giving REASONS for the choice
List	Produce a NUMBERED LIST of words, sentences or comments to make it clear.
Analyze	Find main ideas; show how they are related and why they are important
Comment On	Discuss, criticize, or explain as completely as possible
Diagram	Make a graph, chart, or drawing including labels and a brief explanation(if needed).
Enumerate	List. Name and list the main ideas one by one with numbers.
Evaluate	Give your opinion or experts opinion. Tell advantages and disadvantages.
Illustrate	Make it clear by using concrete examples, comparisons, or analogies
Interpret	Give the meaning using examples and personal comments to make it clear.
Justify	State why you think it is so. Give reasons for your statements of conclusion.
Outline	Give a general summary. Should contain main ideas supported by secondary ideas. Omit minor details and show organization.
Prove	Show by argument or logic that it is true.
Relate	Show the connection between things by telling how one causes or is like another.
Review	Give a survey or summary by looking at important parts and criticizing where needed.
State	Describe the main points in precise terms. Use brief clear sentences.
Summarize	Give a brief, condensed account of the main ideas.
Trace	Follow the progress or history of the subject.

CATEGORIZING INFORMATION

**Select 15-20 key words and phrases and identify 3-5 categories for the words.
List the categories in the top row then list the words under the appropriate category label.**

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5

Internet Resources

Writing in the Disciplines – provides rationale and examples of writing activities appropriate for content classes

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/2004dec/classroom.html>

Three Kinds of Writing – resource material from Western Kentucky University; provides examples of prompts, teaching strategies, teaching materials, student work, and commentary in support of various types of writing

<http://www.wku.edu/3kinds/index.html>

Think Literacy: Subject Specific Strategies – links to .pdf files for integrating reading, writing, speaking into subject-specific courses.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentssuccess/thinkliteracy/library.html>

Literacy Matters – provides information on using literacy strategies in content classes; use the menu on the left to navigate to strategies for specific academic courses.

<http://www.literacymatters.org/content/overview/intro.htm>

Interactive Writing Models – website provides full-length model papers (various types), with interactive notes to help make writing stronger.

<http://go.hrw.com/eolang/modbank/>

Thinkfinity – free online resources include panel-reviewed links to top sites, professionally developed lesson plans, classroom activities, materials to help with daily classroom planning, and comprehensive search engines for all subjects.

<http://www.thinkfinity.org/>

Writing in Science – provides resources to methods and references science teachers can use to assist students in honing skill of writing to communicate in science.

<http://msteacher.org/epubs/science/QuickTakes/communication.aspx>

Blogging in Science – provides information about benefits of blogging in science (but could also apply to most other subjects); lots of other useful science links from menu.

http://teachertipstraining.suite101.com/article.cfm/science_blogs_in_high_and_middle_school_classes

Writing in Math – links to various writing in math resources, including journal prompts (scroll down for resources for older students).

<http://letsplaymath.wordpress.com/2007/08/21/writing-to-learn-math/>

Writing in Math – highlights objections and frequently asked questions about writing in math; also includes some resource links at the bottom

<http://www.thewritingsite.org/articles/vol2num2a.asp>

Integrating Writing in Mathematics – hints and tips for integrating writing into math instruction.

http://www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/subject/int_writing_math.phtml

Social Studies Archive – Extensive list of websites related to various topics in social studies that could be used as the basis for research and writing

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/educ/sites.htm>

Graphic Organizers – collection of graphic organizers useful or planning writing, note-taking, organizing ideas, etc.

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>